Chorino and stop lawlessness there. He dismissed our situation, shouting to the crowd, "If you go to Siberia for these men, remember that I warned you."

"Nobody will go to Siberia for these two," the muzhiks replied. "The people will dispose of them."

As soon as the sheriff disappeared, they again threw Eugene and me to the floor.

EYES

Blood dripping from the cuts on my head blinded me. I wiped it away and again could vaguely see the waiting room and the crowd. Everything seemed remote and impersonal.

A freight train arrived but nobody paid any attention to it. The room was no longer packed, but some fifty or sixty peasants stood about us in a semicircle, guarding us for the trial.

Eugene came to himself and looked at me. I read the question in his disfigured face and nodded. He closed his eyes again. Then I saw a yellow, wrinkled face just before my eyes. An old woman with a heavy homespun kerchief around her head bent over Eugene, lamenting, "Not older than my grandson. . . . Is your mother alive? And grandmother? Both must be alive. . . . Our muzhiks are worse than beasts. . . . What did they do to the boy? . . ." And, turning to the crowd, she said in a voice shaken by tears, "Why do you let him suffer? Kill these two at once!"

A man stepped out of the crowd, leaned forward, looked closely at us and exclaimed, "I know these men! I heard them speak in Chorino. By God, I did." People pressed around him. He stooped over me, small, poorly dressed, with a sparse blond beard, patched felt boots. "I heard every word. Brothers, did they talk! The reddish one talked like a priest, and the blond one also. And both moved their arms, thus and thus." He tried to imitate our gestures.

A stern voice asked him, "What did they say, you clown?" The man said meekly, "How should I know? They are educated people."

I lay on the floor, my head against the leg of the bench, reconciled to the thought that these were the last minutes of my life. I had only one desire—to see to the very last what was going on around me. Without glasses, I had to strain my eyes even to make out the faces of those in front of me. Probably there was something odd in my look, for several times I heard, "This one is still gazing. . . ."

An old man stooped over me. He looked very round in his thick yellow coat girdled by a red kerchief. His beard was snow white,